
THE IMPORTANCE OF RELIGION TO
NATIONAL PROSPERITY.

A
S E R M O N.

2265

3

THE IMPORTANCE OF RELIGION TO NATIONAL
PROSPERITY.

A
SERMON,

PREACHED IN THE
HIGH CHURCH OF EDINBURGH,
May 15. 1794,

AT THE OPENING OF
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE
CHURCH OF SCOTLAND,

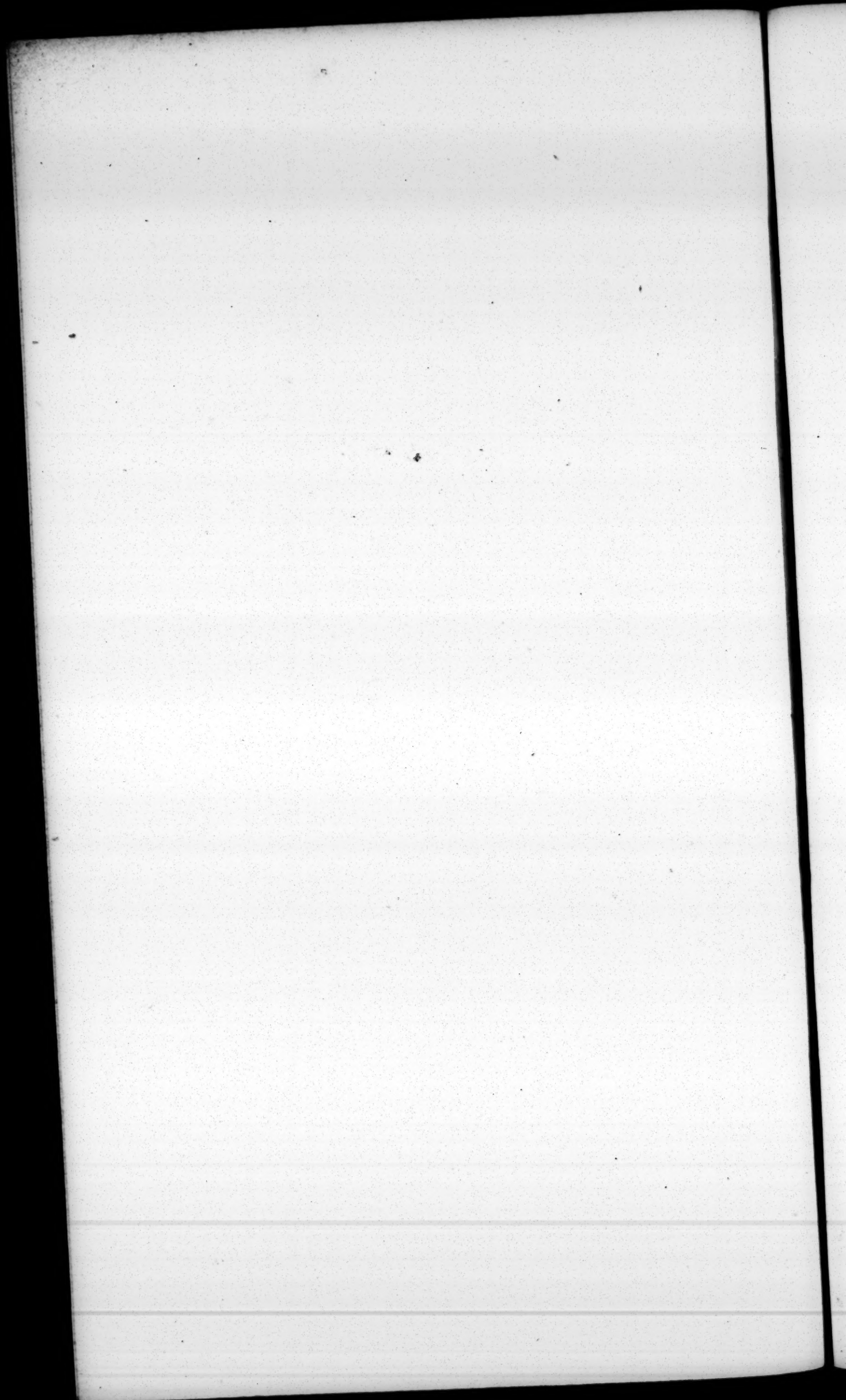
BEFORE HIS GRACE,
DAVID, EARL OF LEVEN AND MELVILL,
HIS MAJESTY'S HIGH COMMISSIONER.

By THOMAS HARDY, D. D.

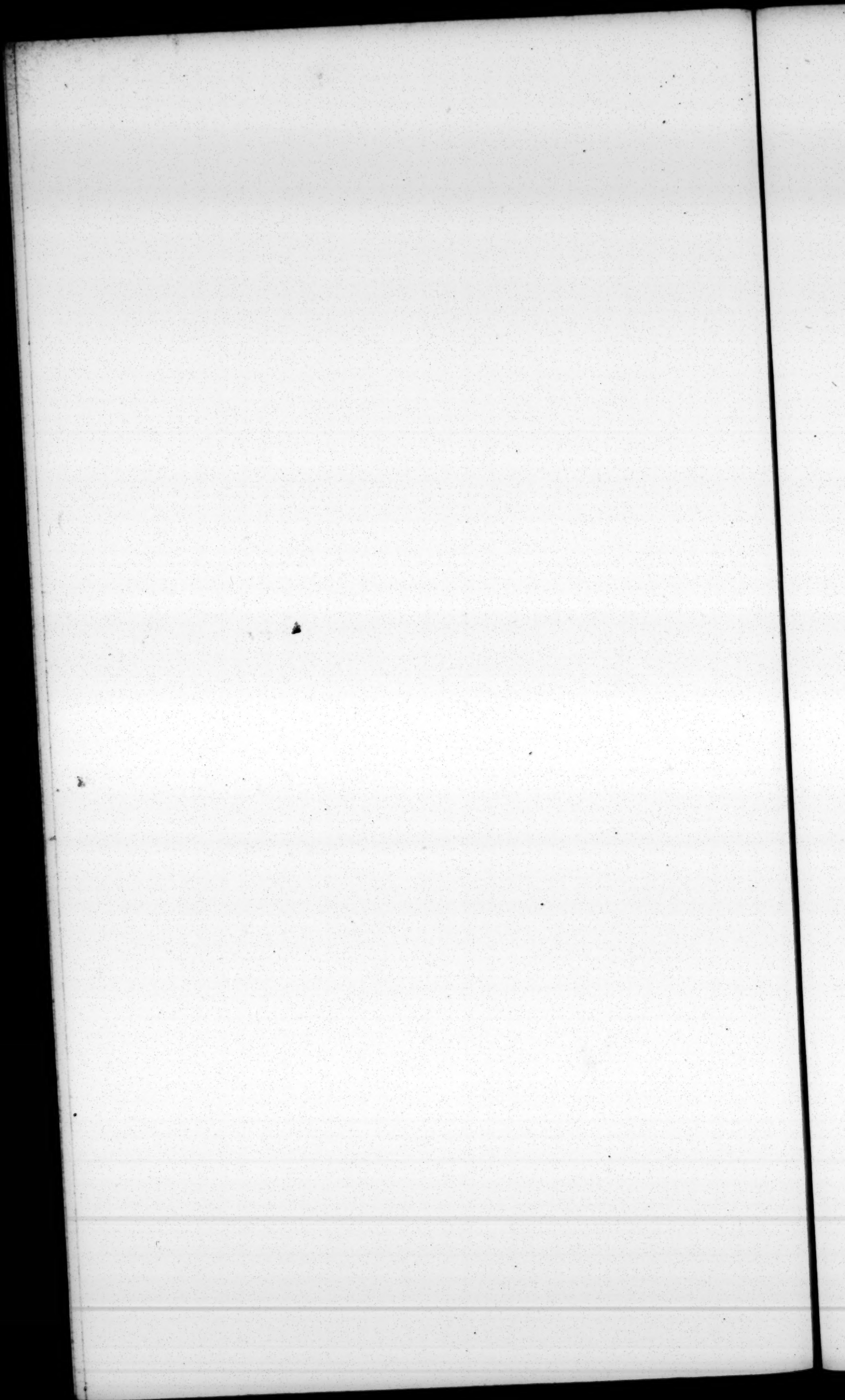
ONE OF THE MINISTERS OF THE CITY, AND REGIUS PROFESSOR OF
DIVINITY AND ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY IN THE UNIVERSITY
OF EDINBURGH, AND MODERATOR OF THE PRE-
CEDING GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

EDINBURGH:
PRINTED BY D. WILLISON,
AND SOLD BY JAMES DICKSON.

M DCC. XCIV.



TO HIS GRACE,
DAVID, EARL OF LEVEN AND MELVILL,
HIS MAJESTY'S HIGH COMMISSIONER
TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND,
THE FOLLOWING SERMON,
PUBLISHED AT HIS GRACE'S DESIRE,
IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED BY
HIS MOST OBEDIENT SERVANT,
THE AUTHOR.



THE IMPORTANCE OF RELIGION TO
NATIONAL PROSPERITY.

A

S E R M O N.

Phil. iv. 8.

FINALLY, BRETHREN, WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE TRUE,
WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE HONEST, WHATSOEVER
THINGS ARE JUST, WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE PURE,
WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE LOVELY, WHATSOEVER
THINGS ARE OF GOOD REPORT; IF THERE BE ANY
VIRTUE, AND IF THERE BE ANY PRAISE, THINK ON
THESE THINGS.

THE deceitfulness of sin has been in no
case more conspicuous than in the attempts
which men have made to separate morality
from religion, and to hold the Christian
A privileges

privileges by some other tenure than that which is established by our charter from God in the New Testament. In this case the people have been misled; but let the blame light where it is due; it lies with the Christian priesthood in various ages, within that confederacy, chiefly, which arrogated the exclusive title of the Holy Catholic Church, and held out its leaders as the legislators of the kingdom of heaven.

The departure of the Church from the primitive ground of practical religion, was owing to various causes. First, points of speculative opinion were brought forward, not into discussion merely, which would have been fair, but into controversy and strife; which was a radical wrong on all sides. The importance of phrases and distinctions was magnified by the passions of the parties, till speculation openly supplanted virtue; and till the old division of mankind into the righteous and the wicked, gave place to a new division, formed upon the theories of parties, and marked by nicknames of malignity.

malignity. Next, the clergy gave themselves up to worldly ambition, claiming to become lords over God's heritage, instead of examples to the flock: and to this object Catholicism was visibly better adapted, than simple holiness and love. By the dexterous management of theoretical niceties, accompanied with a complicated ritual, the priest was able to accomplish a scheme, which would have been utterly spoiled by adhering to the advice of the apostle, to think on those things which are true, honest, just, and lovely.

During the progress of corruption and of usurpation, one important concern was overlooked, viz. the security of the Christian interest as a whole; even that security which both Scripture and Providence shew, depends on the moral character of the religion, and the purity in which it is preserved. Hence the Eastern church was delivered to be trodden down by the Arabian superstition; and events in the Western Catholic church indicate, how unable it is to

meet the day of storm, and how readily the very profession is abandoned, when the real strength of the cause, its characters of truth, rectitude, and charity, have been laid aside.

The words of the apostle which ly before us, relate to essential characters of Christianity, as we have received it from the Lord, and from his apostles in the New Testament. And the present aspect of Providence suggests the propriety of considering these characters, more especially in their connection with national felicity. I propose, then, to consider,

- I. The importance of practical religion to civil and political society.
- II. The means of advancing the moral prosperity of this country.

We are to consider,

- I. The importance of practical religion to civil and political society.

Practical

Practical religion presupposes faith in God, and in Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, and a firm attachment to the truths of the gospel. It is the sacred edifice which must rest on this good foundation, and can stand on no other. We do not therefore slight the fundamental doctrines of our faith, but rather vindicate their honour and their value, when we exhibit moral practice as the indispensable character of true religion, and as the channel through which its benefits are diffused in the course of human life.

True religion protects *civil* society, by preventing the commission of crimes. This is one of the objects for which laws are framed ; they are in this case absolutely necessary in every state, though they can only deter men from outward acts of injury by punishments. But religion possesses a wider range of influence ; it preserves the conscience of the individual in perpetual force and perpetual vigilance ; it restrains the intention and the inclination to evil ; it checks the first emotions of those passions from
which

which injuries proceed ; and it connects righteousness and temperance with the judgment to come : even in darkness and solitude, when there is no human eye to witness the conduct, it gives to man the consciousness of his Maker's presence.

Religion protects *political* society, by preventing public wrongs. It is to be feared, that many persons are not sufficiently aware of the *sinfulness* of those actions which tend to injure the State, and to excite in the minds of men the sentiments of disaffection to regular government. They consider religion as altogether a separate concern, which bears no sort of relation to the duties of subjects. The radical error in this case is derived from opinions concerning the nature of religion, which men have borrowed from other sources, and not from the New Testament. The evil will follow of course, if they place religion, wholly or chiefly, either in a series of abstract propositions, or in a routine of exterior service, or in both together, while they tear the system of virtue from the institutes

stitutes of Jesus Christ. In this state of the human mind, all the relations of life will be left unprotected by principle; there will be no ready submission to lawful authority for conscience sake; no respect to the rights of property as they are guarded by justice; no repugnance of mind at the prospect of particular or universal depredation; no horror at the introduction of anarchy, and at the sufferings of families in civil broils; no remorse in directing the scenes of ruin and bloodshed. Religion, as separate from virtue, *is not from heaven, but of men*; it is zeal without integrity, and force without goodness; it is either fanaticism or superstition; it is the spirit of faction disguised, and rendered doubly sour, impenetrable, and obstinate in its hostility to mankind.

True religion, on the contrary, in the simplicity of heavenly grace, teaches and inspires those principles which render a man a blessing to his neighbours and to society at large; it renders him contented with his condition, kindly affectioned to men, and
thankful

thankful to God : It makes him a son of peace, a friend of good order, firm in his integrity, gentle in his manners, and faithful in his public duties.

It is well, it may be said, religion is a good thing for the common people ; it should be kept up among them ; they cannot be held to their duty without it ! Sentiments like this (seldom perhaps so broadly expressed) are sometimes heard to drop from the lips of men from whom better sense might be expected ; and when a sentiment of this kind occurs in conversation, it either calls forth our patience, our regret, or our compassion, according to the degree of indifference, or of gravity, or of flatness, with which the thing is uttered.

Good for the common people is it ? And who are the other people that do not need its aid ? Is it in the power of wealth, or of birth, or of office, to find some other guard to the rectitude of human conduct, independent of the fear of God ? Is there any
equivalent

equivalent under heaven, which any class of men can pledge to society instead of religious principle? The assignats stamped in the manufactories of the world, are they to be rated as equal in security with the gold of the sanctuary? We will at least examine them first.

A man who possesses property, it may be said, has his *interest* in pledge. It is true; and, in respect of general politics, it will often keep him to his duty: But, in civil life, and amidst those personal transactions which more remotely affect the state of the country, interest may become his snare, instead of his protection; for, in following it without the controul of religion, without that moral wisdom which looks farther than to the acquisition of his thirty pieces of silver, he may be tempted to injustice, to oppression, to unkindness, to various forms of wrong, which slacken those bonds of attachment between the various ranks of men, on which the safety of the community depends.

B

Then,

Then, if worldly interest alone will not do, let the sense of *honour* be trusted in public life, and in the upper ranks in society. This pretence is most confidently stated; yet we must not be misled by the ambiguity of a term. If honour is understood to mean what the apostle expresses by *whatsoever things are honest*, according to the appropriated meaning of the word *honest* in the ancient moral philosophy, the point is granted: Society is safe here; for this honour, which is the real dignity of a virtuous mind acting in the presence of God, is a branch of practical religion derived from the sound root of religious faith. But, if by *honour* is meant, that capricious principle which is regulated by fashionable opinion, and not by the law of conscience; which postpones the tradesman's bill to the debt of the gaming table; which permits unlimited abuse of the name of God; which attaches no blame to the seduction of female innocence; which lays no restraint on the harshness of speech or behaviour, if the sufferer is a person

son of plebeian degree, but which makes it infamous to imitate or obey our Saviour in the forgiveness of affronts, and enjoins the commission of murder in single combat: This honour will not protect society; it will neither secure the good conduct of those who follow it, nor attach others to their persons or their principles.

If the importance of religion through all the ranks of the community, has at any time escaped the observation of some, it can be overlooked no longer. The theories which depart from this foundation, and which treat religion with neglect in the scene of human affairs, will not bear discussion now; the red blast from their own desert has consumed them. From the midst of Europe a cry has gone up: it is the voice of millions of men, women, and children, in misery: a great people is overwhelmed in calamity, desolation, and ruin. It is not to boast over the fallen, but to read with awe the warnings of Providence to all nations,

tions, that we stand to contemplate the mighty wreck. France is destroyed ; it is no more a nation ; the people are turned loose in the land ; without government, without worship, without law, without property, without a sense of justice, without a feeling of humanity : With no principle of conduct, but universal terror ; with no history from day to day, but of conspiracies, imprisonments, and executions. Its cities are scenes of slaughter, its rivers are tinged with human blood ; and, in the open country, in some districts, no trace of man is seen for many a league, but the ashes of villages, and the bones of the dead scattered in the fields.

In that country, the great bond itself of civil society is gone : The people have been cheated out of religion ; and this is the origin of the whole. They boast that they have thrown it away ; but they are mistaken. They threw away many things ; but the religion of the New Testament was
not

not there, either to act or to suffer in the revolution. They threw away what remained of the profession; but, unless the practice had been extinguished from their habits, they could not have done so. They had not even the form of godliness to dispose of at the time: the power thereof is what no one man, much less a nation, can renounce on a sudden. They contrived indeed to astonish all Europe, by adopting systematical precautions to prevent religion from ever recovering its ground; by abolishing its weekly memorial; by tearing up that ancient fence which the Creator had planted around it, and which the Redeemer had consecrated anew in his resurrection. But, the sanctification of the Lord's day must have been long abandoned; the spirit of the great cause must have evaporated; the Christian church must have been gone in substance, before men could have done a deed like this.

The church of the New Testament would
not

not only have kept its ground, but would have saved the country. The Catholic church in France fell in the first shock. The State had for ages trusted to its ecclesiastical ally, whom it believed to be strong and brave; deceived by his cyclopic size, his confident aspect, and his swelling words of vanity: but, in heart he was a coward, in understanding a fool, and his arm was palsied.

Politicians never blunder so fatally, as when they mistake the mode by which religion can sustain the State, and when they trust that support to the influence of a professional confederacy, and to the effect of superstition, rather than to the real principles of religion and virtue in the people. Under this error, their measures go to exalt the clergy, to give them an interest against the success of plain truth, and to confirm the fabric of superstition and imposture. The revolution of France is the dreadful lesson, written in characters of blood, declaring

claring to all the world that the religious system of a country, in as far as it departs from the simplicity of truth, is weak, and in as far as it departs from pure piety and virtue, it is worthless—weak and worthless, in a political, as well as in a moral view.

France fell, because the two main pillars of strength, which are truth and virtue, were shaken to the foundations; because profligacy and infidelity having first corrupted the upper ranks in life, at last fatally infected the body of the people; because true religion was excommunicated by the Church; and its place poorly occupied by a patched figure of wood, and hay, and stubble, which the clergy approached with seeming gravity; while one part of the laity laughed at it, and another class began to resent its presence as an insult to their understandings.

Without religion, the community cannot be safe: and religion supports civil and political

litical fociety only thus, **by** making men good ; good fathers, good masters, good children, good fervants, good neighbours, good subjects ; and, to fay all in one word, good Christians.

The interests of fociety require, that in this moral operation of religious principle, it fhould not be peculiar to any one clafs of men, but pervade alike all the ranks of fociety : that high and low, rich and poor, guided alike by the fame impreffions, of reverence towards God, and faith in our Lord Jefus Chrift, and influenced by the one fpirit of truth and holinefs, may dwell together as brethren, enjoying the bleffings of God with contented minds, and with united prayers and dutiful fentiments for all in lawful authority, leading quiet and peaceable lives in all godlinefs and honefty.

We have now feen the importance of practical religion to civil and political fociety. We proceed to the

II. Ge-

II. General object of this discourse :

To consider the means of securing and advancing the moral prosperity of this country.

Among a people attached in any degree to practical religion, scenes like those which have disgraced the human character in France, could not take place. In our own country, it is to be hoped that the reformed religion, the pure light of scripture, a simple church, liberty secured by law, and all that store of blessings which the people enjoy under an excellent constitution, have so attached the hearts of a vast majority to their duties civil and sacred, that they are incapable of entertaining a wish for the subversion of public order. Nevertheless, the state of awful desertion in which the French nation lies, is to be regarded as a warning in the course of Providence. We are bound to attend to our security, by guarding especially against those sources of destruction by

C

which

which it has been overwhelmed. We are solemnly called of heaven to beware of irreligion and profligacy, and to adhere with renewed zeal to the things which are true, honest, just, and pure.

1. The moral prosperity of this country is to be secured and advanced by the conduct of men of rank and property. The importance of these men is great in the system of this country, both in a civil and a religious view. On the preservation of their influence, the constitution itself depends. If that influence should ever be superseded in the representative branch of the Legislature, all would be lost. Property is the pledge to the community, of the fidelity of its rulers to law and justice; power without property is the very engine of plunder, and lets loose those hands which good laws are meant to restrain. Even suffrage extended beyond those bounds which mark a solid interest in the established order of society, would be quickly and fatally followed

lowed up by levelling and destruction. To the men of rank and property the country looks up with confidence, as to the only safe depositaries of civil influence, and of the elective franchise. To the same men the people will look up as the patterns of public manners, and the leaders of society in its general course; and on this is founded the special obligation, which the singular events in providence now lay on such men, to stand faithful to religion and virtue. They are morally responsible, in a certain extent, for the principles of the people: let them therefore attend to these principles. They do attend, and with becoming concern, to the progress of such political doctrines as are visibly framed for civil disaster: but they ought to go higher; to detect and to obviate the evil at its source, and to come forward firmly on the ground of Christian virtue. They know, that, on that ground only, the people can be trusted. Now, there are two ways of directing the people thither; and let the men who ought to have weight
in

in society, choose between them : either to say, Go you and worship God, for it is your duty ; while I visit my farm, my horses, my account-book, my law-papers, my card-table. Or, to say, Come and let us worship God, and bless his name together, for he is our father, and we all are brethren.

It is necessary to the safety of this country, not only that the men of rank, property, business, and office, should acknowledge the ordinances of religion, by faithful attendance, but that this attendance should, in good earnest, flow from religious principle. The sense of civil utility, alone, will not steadily support even the outward profession ; it will not sustain that uniform countenance which is due to religion ; it will not guard practical Christianity, nor bear up piety in the land : Its proper influence, now, is to awaken men to consideration. But when higher motives take the lead, when faith and a good conscience direct the tenor of the life, the civil utility will follow

low as a consequence, sure and safe, for the benefit of all ranks of men.

The beneficial effects of true religion in the higher classes, are manifold even in this life. A religious gentleman holds a degree of personal respect in society, which fortune alone can never obtain. His inferiors are attached to him in their hearts; they honour the man, according to that moral approbation which the God of nature has taught them to feel for worth; and they connect the civil and personal distinction, as forming a claim to unlimited regard. Next, a man of rank who is faithful to his obligations, as they are laid in the New Testament, learns in the school of Christ to maintain a conversation void of offence, to preserve his manners from that cold neglect, that haughty arrogance, that aristocratical contumely which no son of Adam bears without resentment: to abstain from those intolerable injuries, by which the heart of a poor father
may

may be broken in the dishonour of his child : to disclaim that rigorous abuse of local power which might ruin the comforts of his dependents, embitter their souls, and drive them to the seditious cabal, to emigration, or to despair. There ly the rocks on which the noblesse of France perished : let the wreck become a beacon to notify the hazard, ere it is approached. A good man, who is the only wise man, learns also to perform the positive part of his social duties ; to attach his inferiors by amiable conduct and good offices ; to shew kindness to all around him ; to be gentle and condescending, to be compassionate, to be liberal, to earn the love, the gratitude and the prayers, of as many as Providence has placed within his influence.

Formerly, in the feudal times, there existed artificial bonds of attachment between superiors and inferiors : In these bonds there was more of evil than of good, and they were happily removed. From habit, however,

ever, what was good in the system remained after its authority was repealed. The people preserved their respect and affection, and their superiors continued their protection and friendship. These salutary bonds have gradually incurred dissolution: the spirit of the commercial system has grinded them too severely, and society seems to be exposed to a suspension of civil attachments. To restore this necessary pledge of the public weal, one mode remains, the most worthy and the most effectual. Let genuine religion, with all its attractive honours, and with all its zeal in good works, encompass and guard the upper ranks; the people will then love them as their fathers, and will bless instead of envying their prosperity. Attachment will not then be their only tie; the lower classes will sensibly and rapidly improve; religious principle will become their guide to contentment, to submission, to peace, to fidelity, to loyalty, and to patriotism.

To

To insure the permanency of national felicity, one point more remains, for the attention of the higher classes ; and that is, the religious education of their own children. There have been instances in the history of domestic life, in which, while all due pains have been bestowed to educate the youth in proper accomplishments for the business of this world, no care whatever has been taken of their qualifications for their eternal condition. Nay, there have been instances, in which the parental conversation and example have been corrupting instead of salutary in their tendency. What is the state of the hapless youth who has thus been treated ; whose soul has been betrayed in his father's house ? This is a case fitted to rend the heart of a Christian, rather than to be unfolded and described in the simplicity of its horrors. The voice of Providence calls to this country, that such things must be known among us no more. The safety of the rising generation, in the families of rank and property, requires, that

that when their turn shall come to sit in the chairs which their parents now fill, they should be *protected by the Christian religion*. Now, therefore, both for this world and the next, the obligation is indispensable upon the parents in such families, to train up their children in the way they should go ; to make the religion of the New Testament predominate in the system of their education ; to lead them to their Creator, to their Redeemer, and to the love of their christian duties ; to give them the habits of devotion ; to introduce them at the throne of grace by prayers for them, and in their presence. If there is a time when a father eminently fulfils the trust of Nature, it is when he acquaints his children with God ; and when, in the midst of them, he kneels down to supplicate the blessings of Heaven upon them : And if there is a time, when the child feels most earnestly the devout impression and the virtuous purpose, it is, when he hears his own father pouring out his heart for him, in intercession with God. When the good principle is thus plant-

D

ed,

ed, and thus watered, the parent may trust to Heaven for the increase; he may look to his offspring in hope, and lay his head in peace upon his pillow.

Under religious and virtuous leaders of society, the country will be safe.—When the judgements of God are abroad in the earth, it is our duty to take warning, and to think seriously on the means of averting them from us and ours: And we are not warranted to say, that any thing short of solid virtue, and permanent religious principle, displayed by the leading classes, and pervading thence the whole body of the community, can effectually protect those constitutional blessings by which Heaven has distinguished this nation.

2. The moral prosperity of this country is to be secured and advanced by the conduct of the clergy.

It is not easy to conceive a mode of church government better suited to every good purpose,

pose, and less capable of doing harm, than the constitution of the Church of Scotland. The arrangement of its judicatures is correct, its discipline is firm, and it is the cheapest establishment in Europe. It is not by official power, but by the want of such power, that the clergy are enabled to serve the country well. Their influence is not corporate or professional ; it must be personal, parochial, and religious ; for they can have no other here. Under their ministry, therefore, religion yields its support to law and government, by its proper operation simply ; by morality, and not by politics. It is superstition only, that requires a political clergy ; and it is now found, that both superstition and sacerdotal politics are but frail matters, when discussion is set afloat in the public mind. True religion, on the contrary, requires only faithful teachers, and plain dealing : it is justified by discussion, it is strong in its substance, and gives effective support to the public tranquillity. The clergy of this Church, a most respectable body
of

of men, fulfil their professional trust, and do all that their country expects and requires from them, when they labour for the advancement of christian principle and christian practice. Their success in this high charge must depend on the divine blessing accompanying the application of such means as are authorized by the spirit of religion.

To render the great system of the pastoral care successful, in promoting the peace and virtue of the country, three points may be suggested to peculiar attention on this occasion: That the clergy should possess the affections of their people; that they should shew their christian liberality towards dissenters; and that they should maintain their brotherly love entire with one another.

The subject of popularity has been often discussed; and the sound principle of the question is now understood. In former times, it is said, there were some errors on this point, in the views of individuals on
opposite

opposite extremes : that popularity was sought after by some, at the expence of simplicity and charity ; and that by others it was spoken against, and disclaimed as an evil. The tendencies to these errors are now seldom to be found. Popularity is not now a ground of rivalry. In its sound form, as consisting, not in the staring admiration, but in the steady affection, of the people, it is understood to be an essential good, as an instrument of usefulness ; and to be most certainly attainable by fair means, by a faithful discharge of duty in public and private life. The affections of the people ought to be cultivated for their benefit, and for the public good : that they may hear gladly, the men, who have no business on earth but to lead them towards heaven, in the paths of piety and virtue.

The clergy ought also to shew christian liberality towards the dissenters. Liberality of sentiment, and strictness of moral principle, most happily unite ; and the union
forms

forms the excellence of a clergyman. The points of difference between the Establishment and the Dissenters in Scotland, are trifles. In the former age, it is true, they were not thought so by either of the parties. Passion was then high, and passion always magnifies its object. One side said, it was a sin to continue with the Church ; the other retorted, that it was a sin to leave it. The tempers and language of both parties are mitigated, by time, and by increasing light ; and such expressions, it is believed, are now more rarely heard : At least, the members of the Establishment, it is to be hoped, disclaim such harsh constructions, in an age when the high-church passions are repudiated by the public sentiment, and the liberality of our holy religion is understood ; and in a country where the christian spirit, overcoming the beast and his image, has dictated the law of Toleration, and written in the Statute book, that to be a dissenter is no crime. It is fit that the work of charity should still advance, that the clergy of the
Establishment

Establishment should be exemplary in treating the dissidents with attention, good will, and christian love; not with a view of bringing them back, but for a much more important object, to promote the union of hearts among christians at large, whether they sojourn in our house or their own; and to sustain the pure honours of our Master's cause throughout our land. By these means, our own souls will be improved, and we shall soften the spirits of those who are most estranged from us. Liberal goodness is the sure and the only channel, by which our influence can ever reach them.

We are fully sensible of the value of our Establishment, we respect its simple dignity, and we gratefully experience the blessings which it yields. But our charity stands on broader ground, than any ecclesiastical constitution on earth: it is our Master's law, and is not to be limited by human arrangements. What though some have Presbyteries and Synods of their own; some only a congregational

congregational discipline, while others prefer a hierarchy in church government, and the use of a liturgy in worship. These circumstances are remote from the merits of the cause: but love is of the essence of the christian religion. We say, therefore, to all these descriptions of people, "Ye are of
 " one family with us in the Lord: the
 " household is his, and we are all free in
 " it. You may lodge with us, or in apart-
 " ments of your own, as you think best:
 " in either case, you are alike entitled to
 " our brotherly love." It is the principle of universal forbearance, which must regenerate the christian world, and lead the religion to victory.

A question occurs here, to invite a digression for a moment. Why do the different religious parties decline to join together freely in occasional communion? I have no answer to give to this, which will justify the conduct of the parties; and therefore, I leave it to be answered in their own thoughts.

Only,

Only, this much is certain, that the LORD JESUS CHRIST did not intend his ordinances for badges of division, but for bonds of union among his followers at large : union, not of party, but of heart and affection. This is Christianity ; the other is something else. It is, however, not a matter of surprise, that some fragments of the old leaven should have escaped the observation of the men, who searched and swept the house at the Reformation : when it is considered, how long and how widely the four mafs of intolerance and uncharitableness had fermented in that catholic confederacy, which not only refused to mix its prayers and sacramental vows with those of dissenters, but went far beyond this, and framed articles of faith to declare its own communion essential to salvation, to fortify its anathema, to make catholicism the life, and excommunication the death, of the soul : as if the Judge of the world had bound himself to decide, as priests might think fit to direct him.

E

Moreover,

Moreover, it is fit that the clergy of this Church should maintain their brotherly love entire with one another. It shall suffice to have mentioned this. No set of men on earth have less to divide about. Appearances for years past have indicated, that the old separation into two parties is tending to extinction ; the interests of the church and country both forbid its revival, and require the predominance of that general harmony, which is happily advancing. The care and pains which many have wasted on the mere phantom of party work, would have gone a great way, if it had been employed in their own improvement, and in the education of their children. The time, we trust, is come, when the Scottish clergy will turn the whole energy of their enlightened minds to pastoral cares, to sacred literature, to domestic tuition, to whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report.

3. The moral prosperity of this country is to be secured and advanced by the system
of

of education. Our forefathers have left us a signal monument of their wisdom, in the institution of parochial schools. The benefits which the people have derived from this institution, are beyond calculation. By the diffusion of knowledge, it has been a nurse to virtue, a source of enjoyment, the foundation of consequence and success to the Scottish people: and, where the plant of genius has at any time sprung up, though on the mountain's side, it has shielded it from the blast, till it could spread its blossoms in safety..

It is objected to the general diffusion of knowledge, that it is not suitable to that class of men who should perform the more laborious services which society requires. The objection has no experience to support it, and is founded in mistake. There is no affinity between knowledge and indolence. On the contrary, an enlightened workman is, in essential points, preferable to one who is illiterate. He brings a clearer intellect

to

to his business ; and, what is of more importance, his moral sentiments naturally partake of the improvement of his mind. He respects more clearly his duty to his employer, or to his customers ; his duty to his own family, and his character among his neighbours. A few instances of idle men who have been bred at school, are nothing in argument : But there is no danger, that, upon the great system, the balance will be against the public, in consequence of doing substantial good to all the families of the land.

That substantial good to the Scottish people, has resulted from the parochial schools, is a matter of demonstration. Whence is that cultivated intelligence of mind, that acquaintance with scripture, that respect for the Lord's day, and for religious ordinances, which more generally characterise the people at large, in this, than in other countries ? It is, that they are taught the elements of knowledge in the parochial schools. The youth,

youth, who offer themselves to business, how are they qualified, in the first instance, to enter the writing-chamber or the counting-house? Or, they who migrate to our sister kingdom, or to foreign lands, without money or friends, and are received with special favour: Whence did they acquire the qualifications which are the certain pledges of their success? The foundation was laid in the parochial schools. Of the students who crowd to our universities, a vast majority could never have trode these courts, unless the parochial schools had furnished them with the opportunity of acquiring the previous discipline in classical literature. The regular supply of enlightened men which the country demands for the pulpits, and for every liberal profession without exception, depends ultimately on the nine hundred nurseries of parochial education.

The prosperity of the country absolutely requires, that the parochial schools should be seminaries of classical literature, and not
English

English schools merely. Our ancestors provided for this by the law of the land, in subjecting the masters to the examination of the Presbytery ; a court which was presumed to be both qualified and disposed to guard this important object : because, if the schools should at any time be surrendered to men void of literature, farther than the mere arts of reading and writing, and exposed to be occupied by cast servants and useless dependents, even the English education would be ruined ; the mass of national literature would suffer a wreck ; a mortal blow would be given to the hopes of ingenious youth in all the families of moderate fortune ; and all the most respectable professions would incur degradation, from the encroachments of ignorance upon them. The country in this case requires to be protected with the utmost vigilance, both by the public spirit of the Laity, in selecting the masters, and by the fidelity of the Clergy, in their legal trust of examining their fitness for classical tuition.

It is objected, further, that there may be
danger,

danger, in a political view, from the degree of information which is spread among the people. If there is any thing to apprehend here, it is, that they have not got enough. Our constitution has nothing to fear from knowledge. It is ignorance alone that can make men insensible of its excellence, or dupes to the leaders of sedition. A crooked and jealous policy can suit only a system of imposture or of wrong. A government which is good, like a religion which is true, has no dependence upon darkness ; it flourishes best in the open day, and amidst the fair and full cultivation of the human understanding. The discussions which of late have agitated the minds of the people, shew, more clearly than ever, the necessity of national instruction on the most liberal scale. Ignorance and prejudice have pitched themselves as the opponents of public order, while reason and argument have stood its defenders. The principles of levelling, anarchy, and plunder, can enter fully into the most illiterate head ; and the whole mystery of their propagation has been conducted

ed

ed by artifice addressing ignorance, broad assertion standing in place of evidence, and abuse in place of argument ; while the defence of all our constitutional blessings rested on principles which can only be fully embraced in an improved state of the human mind.

We are a free people ; and, without knowledge, man cannot bear his freedom steadily : like a fool who has obtained a fortune which he cannot manage, and throws it away among sharpers, flatterers, and projectors. But an enlightened people, possessed of liberty, understand the value of their inheritance, and enjoy it in contentment and safety.

In every view, political, civil, moral and religious, the system of national education ought to be encouraged and promoted. Of this system, the parochial schools are the fundamental part. The education of the youth of the kingdom in these seminaries, is conducted by a body of men, decent in
their

their manners, diligent in their employment, and generally better qualified, than could be expected from the extreme narrowness of their appointments. Might we be permitted to forget the formidable confederation by which these valuable and unprotected men were repelled and silenced in their petition ! It is understood, however, that the country is in some progress of recovering its honour and interest in this case, by voluntary and parochial arrangements.

The system of education is a matter of immense importance ; and, of course, it is the interest of the public, on the broad scale of calculation, with a view to its essential prosperity, that the office of teacher of youth should be supported ; so far, at least, that a well educated and virtuous man should not shrink from it as from a situation of hopeless penury, but should rather come forward to accept a trust, where only such as he, can accomplish a work on which the welfare of society depends.

The

The sum of the whole is this : The success of Christian principle and practice in this country, is what all ranks are called in Providence to look up to, and to guard, as the consecrated pledge of our civil and political prosperity. This object may be promoted, and the public finally insured, by the combined effect of three great systems of moral influence:—the behaviour of men of rank; the pastoral care ; and the instruction of the youth. In all these departments of influence and trust, let men do their duty ; let them give their hearts to the diffusion of good principles throughout the community ; and let them support one another as workers together for good. Then shall piety, knowledge, integrity, loyalty, reverence for the constitution in Church and State, universal virtue and patriotism, be the sure blessings of our land, and preserve the great inheritance for future generations.